

Castlemaine Naturalist



Cockatiel

December '95

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Bells Swamp Excursion, 11/11/'95

This excursion attracted a very good roll up of members who enjoyed a rewarding afternoon under the guidance of Chris and his invaluable telescope.

The bird count numbers reached 47 at the swamp with several other sightings on the way home to take the afternoon count to over 50.

Some of the more unusual sightings included a single Cockatiel, Australian Shovellers, Olive-backed Oriole and Black-tailed Native Hens.

The weather was fine and mild with a light wind and light cloud with the temperature approx. 17°C.

Other bird sightings were-

Australasian and Hoary-headed Grebes; Sacred Kingfisher; Black-winged Stilt; Hardhead; Musk, Mountain, Wood and Black Ducks; Grey Teal; Little Corella; Sulphur-crested Cockatoo; Galah; Black Swan; Little Grassbird; Magpie Lark; Kookaburra; Swamp Harrier; Whistling Kite; Little Eagle; Brown Falcon; Restless Flycatcher; Magpie; Australian Raven; Crested Pigeon; Red-rumped Parrot; Welcome Swallow; Willie Wagtail; Eurasian Coot; Dusky Moorhen; Purple Swamp Hen; Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike; White-faced and White-necked Herons; Wattlebird; White-plumed Honeyeater; Dusky Woodswallow; Sacred Ibis; Little Pied and Pied Cormorants; Masked Lapwing; Yellow-rumped Thornbill.

K. Dredge.

Eltham Copper Butterflies

A study has revealed that the Eltham Copper butterflies in the gardens have really benefitted from the Broom-pulls, as the area is now the main Victorian area for the butterflies.

"Inala", a Peaceful Place

We spent three nights and almost 3 whole days on "Inala", the 500 acre property under pasture and forest on Cloudy Bay Road, South Bruny Island. Owned by Tonia Cochran and husband Col Evans, it

would have to rate as our favourite spot on our Tasmanian holiday.

Before we'd even caught the ferry to Bruny things looked promising as at our lunch spot not far from Kettering there'd been quite a number of birds, including a male Pink Robin.

We drove off the ferry on North Bruny onto a good sealed road, and soon saw the only grebe we saw for the whole trip, but when we got to the T intersection where we turned south we hit a rather rough gravel road which alternated with short sections of sealed road. Apparently getting grading equipment over to Bruny is a bit of a hassle, but the locals take the roads for granted and we soon got used to them.

We arrived at our accommodation, a three bedroom farmhouse which was well set up and equipped, and a couple of hundred metres off the road, about an hour after leaving the ferry. There was a welcome note on the whiteboard, and the information that Tonia would be around later in the day to see everything was alright. There were plenty of books, reference and general reading, and a herbarium of plants that are on the property that Tonia, a Botanist and Taxonomist, is putting together, I found that very handy. Out in the garden there were Dusky and Flame Robins, Black-headed and Yellow-throated Honeyeaters, a Tasmanian Native Hen and Superb Blue Wrens.

Tonia turned up just before tea to find if we'd settled in, and told us where to find the Forty-spotted Pardelotes less than 100 metres from the house, a nesting Native Hen, and another one with chicks. She invited us to wander all over the property if we wished, and to go up to their house if we wanted anything at all.

Next morning we headed for the White (Manna) Gums (*E. viminalis*) over the creek behind our accommodation, and almost straight away I clearly saw my first Forty-spotted Pardelote. We walked on up behind a dam in the next partly cleared paddock, and found lots of Prickly Moses and Hop Goodenia and a Tall Greenhood, and what proved to be *Caledonia lyalli* - I saw hundreds with Tonia on the day we left!. Another plant that had me tricked I identified as Lowland Richea in my "Field Guide to Flowers and Plants of Tasmania" by Launceston Field Naturalists Club, and this was confirmed later by Tonia.

Before the walk was over I'd added Green Rosellas, Welcome Swallow, Tree Martins, Forest Raven and Fantailed Cuckoo to my Inala list.

In the afternoon we drove to nearby Cloudy Bay, where we were fascinated by the brick red of some of the waves. I didn't find out what was causing it. We went for a walk along the beach and spotted a pair

of little birds running ahead of us - Hooded Plovers! I had a look where their footprints started, but there was no sign of eggs.

I went out again to the White Gums later that afternoon and again saw the Forty-spotted and also Striated Pardalotes. A Fantailed Cuckoo was calling, numbers of Tree Martins were hunting and New Holland Honeyeaters were giving any other small birds in the trees a bad time! When I got back to the house there were two Beautiful Fire-tails feeding on the lawn and a Strong-billed Honeyeater on one of the trees.

Next morning I set out over a very boggy paddock before 7am (it was before 6am over here) and found a young Native Laurel, a lovely understory tree which has white flowers and glossy dark green leaves.

Later in the morning we drove down the Labillardiere Peninsular road to Bruny lighthouse, built in 1836 and the oldest lighthouse in continuous use in Australia. It was blowing a gale and hard to keep our feet, but the views from the lighthouse, the Pimelea bushes in flower, and the two Echidnas in the car park made it all worth while. The Tasmanian Echidna is much paler, less spiny and more furry than the Victorian one, and it also seems to be in less of a hurry to dig in. We saw another one on the side of the road on the way back to Lunawanna.

After driving over the hills to Adventure Bay we came back the long way around, mainly through farming country, and called on Tonia at their house. Tonia and Col have been to the Antarctic seven times in the last ten years and they have Bonza, one of the old Antarctic Huskies, in retirement on their property. I felt we were meeting a Celebrity.

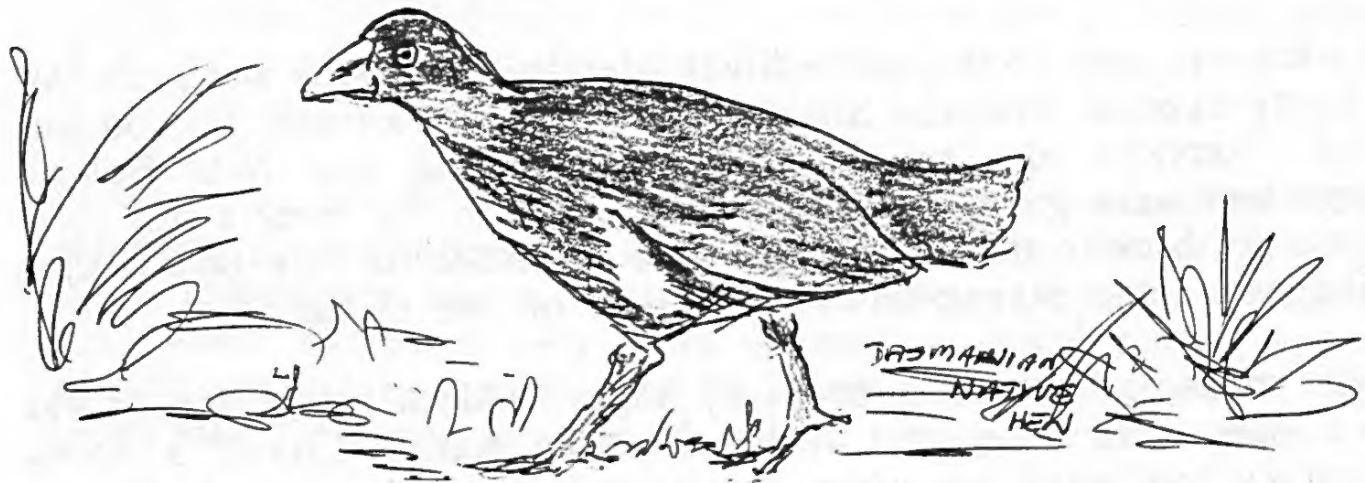
Because there were no bookings the night we were to leave Tonia invited us to stay on as long as we liked, and she offered to take me up to the Boronia plantation where the Swift Parrots are nesting - but, of course, they weren't there when we got there - and the nesting Pink Robins weren't at home either further on in one of the gullies, but we did see Clinking Currawongs, a Brown Falcon, Swamp Harrier, Eastern Spinebills, Green Rosellas and a Tasmanian Thornbill. Tonia also identified a mystery bird call for me - the Olive Whistler.

We also saw lots of Mayfly Orchids (*Acianthus caudatus*) Nodding Greenhoods, Maroon Hoods, Mountain Caledenia (*C. lyalli*), Common Bird Orchids and Waxlips. Another attractive plant was *Hibbertia procumbens*.

We got back to the house at lunchtime, and after farewells drove off adding a Yellow-rumped Thornbill to the Inala list at the gate.

Inala Bird List

E = endemic to Tasmania



Welcome Swallow
Tree Martin
Blackbird
Superb Blue Fairy Wren
Tasmanian Thornbill E
Yellowtailed Thornbill
Flame Robin
Dusky Robin E
Grey Fantail
Grey Shrike-thrush
Olive Whistler (h)
Forty-spotted Pardelote E
Striated Pardelote
Eastern Spinebill
Yellow-throated, E
Strong-billed, E
Black-headed, E

Crescent,
and New Holland Honeyeaters
Beautiful Firetail
House Sparrow
Common Starling
Dusky Woodswallow
Grey (Clinking) Currawong
Forest Raven
Pacific Black Duck
Marsh Harrier
Brown Falcon
Tasmanian Native Hen E
Masked Lapwing
Green Rosella E
Fantailed Cuckoo.

The property has all 11 endemics, and I saw 8 of them there, but I did see Yellow Wattlebirds and Black Currawongs on other occasions and found when I checked my field guide to identify a funny-looking thornbill, that we had both seen the Scrub-tit at Fern Tree near Mount Wellington

Rita Mills.

A letter recieved from Tonia since this was written adds an interesting rider to the story. To quote -

"Have patted Bonza for you - he's in fine form at the moment, sprawled out all over the front verandah. As I write this, I am watching a pair of Tasmanian thornbills collecting his hair for their nests - they're only a couple of metres away, just outside the window. Bonza hair has proved very popular with the birds. We've had an assortment of species including blue wrens, thornbills and a horde of strong-billed honeyeaters traveling back and forth with big gobs of hair. The honeyeaters have been collecting it for a couple of months now - quite sure they're building the Taj Mahal out there somewhere!" R.M.

Welcome to new members, Margaret Dunne, who has renewed her membership after an absence, and E.S. and E.C.Morris.

A Mystery

Rosella Boxes

Two nest boxes hanging on Yellow-gum trees near our large dam continue to disappoint. They have been occupied and laid in by Eastern Rosellas, but no young have appeared. Today I found one of the boxes, from which I had lately disturbed a mother brooding four eggs, empty but for eggshells, ants, a few feathers and chewed bits of nest-box piled up as chaff. The eggs seem to have been pecked and broken into by a bird with a smallish bill.

In the other box I found all bare and clean save for two similarly plundered eggs. Curious, because two weeks ago I had thrown out another two such broken eggs and stuffed in some handfulls of straw to detect any further occupancy. Every skerrick straw was gone. I had thought that rosellas never did any housekeeping at all. What is the sneaky predator? Are the nest-boxes doomed?

Bob Webb

Fryerstown Bird List, Oct. '95

Unusual sightings - Satin Flycatcher (R); Black-faced Woodswallow (RR) Pacific Heron, Southern Whiteface (RR), Varied Stitella (MC)

Frequency - (C) Common, (VC) Very common, (MC) moderately common, (RR) rather rare, (R) rare.

White-faced Heron (C)
Wood (Maned) Duck (VC)
Pacific Black Duck (VC)
Brown Goshawk (MC)
Wedgetailed Eagle (C)
Masked Lapwing (VC)
Common Bronzewing (C)
Galah (VC)
Long-billed Corella (VC)
Eastern Rosella (C)
Crimson Rosella (VC)
Kookaburra (C)
Southern Boobook (C)
Welcome Swallow (C)
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike (C)
Scarlet Robin (C)
Eastern Yellow Robin (C)
Jacky Winter (C)
Crested Shrike-tit (MC)
Rufous Whistler (C)
Grey Shrike-thrush (C)
Willie Wagtail (C)
Restless Flycatcher (MC)
Grey Fantail (C)
Blue Wren (VC)
White-browed Scrub-wren (C)
Striated, (C)
Brown, (C) and

Yellow-rumped, (C) Thornbills
White-throated Treecreeper (C)
Red Wattlebird (VC)
Yellow-tufted, (C)
White-eared, (MC)
Yellow-faced, (MC)
White-plumed, (C)
Fuscous, (MC) and
New Holland (C) Honeyeaters
Eastern Spinebill (C)
Silvereye (C)
Mistletoebird (C)
Spotted Pardalote (MC)
Striated Pardalote (MC)
Red-browed Firetail (C)
Goldfinch (C)
Olive-backed Oriole (C)
Magpie Lark (C)
White-winged Chough (C)
Dusky Woodswallow (MC)
Grey Currawong (C)
Austrian Raven (C)
Little Raven (C)
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo (C)
Blackbird (C)
Fantailed Cuckoo (MC)
Shining Bronze-cuckoo (MC)
Pallid Cuckoo (MC)

M and K Dredge

Sandon Bird List October '95

Pacific Black Duck	and Striated Thornbills
Greater Black Cormorant	Red Wattlebird
White-faced Heron	Yellow-faced.
Little Eagle	Yellow-tufted,
Masked Lapwing	and Brown-headed Honeyeaters
Common Bronzewing (h)	Scarlet Robin
Galah	Red-capped Robin
Long-billed Corella	Eastern Yellow Robin
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	White-browed Babbler
Crimson Rosella	Rufous Whistler
Eastern Rosella	Grey Shrike-thrush
Red-rumped Parrot	Magpie Lark
Pallid Cuckoo	Grey Fantail
Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo (1/10)	Willie Wagtail
Shining Bronze-cuckoo	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike
Tawny Frogmouth (h)	Olive-backed Orlole (h 16/10)
Kookaburra	Australian Magpie
White-throated Tree-creeper	Grey Currawong
Wren	Australian Raven
Spotted Pardalote	White-winged Chough
Striated Pardalote	Red-browed Finch
Speckled Warbler	Diamond Firetail
Weebill	Mistletoebird
Brown,	Welcome Swallow
Buff-rumped,	Common Blackbird (h)
Yellow-rumped,	

The Red-capped Robin is a new record for the block. The male was heard, then seen at midday in our scrappy regrowth forest.

Seeking anecdotal evidence about Red-capped Robins in our area, I found that they used to be frequently seen in a leafy garden on the edge of Newstead but have not been around since the 1982 drought. They also disappeared after the drought from the Strathlea area but there has been the odd sighting over the last five years.

Susanna Starr

An Assertive Female

What kind of bird patrols its territory and flies angrily at rivals? A male bird in the nesting season, I should have thought, anxious to drive away foreign gene-donors. So why is a female Rufous Whistler patrolling three windows at the western end of our house, singing, chattering, displaying, hurling herself at the glass, unassisted by any male? A nice mess she has made of the adjacent bicycle handle-bar she perches on. Its been going on for a month now. How does this fit with the nest-building and brooding she is supposed to be doing? If the bird books are right she cannot be a cryptic male. Is she just a mixed-up kid? (Not a feminist is she? Ed.)

Bob Webb

Susanna also recorded an observation about this bird, followed later by a note to say that they had solved the problem by temporarily tacking old terylene curtains to the outside of the windows

Roadside Values Map Launch

The map and accompanying summary depicting the roadsides conservation values for the Maldon district was launched in Lewis Road near Maldon on Friday Nov. 17. Ern Perkins of the F.N.C. was heavily involved in the study. (At a meeting attended by two of the club the following Thursday night the commissioners added their acknowledgment of the work done by Ern.)

The Project manager, David Fairbridge, remarked that the Map and accompanying summary of the Maldon Management Plan was receiving a lot of interest throughout the state, and even interstate. He commented that it is in a form that is easily acceptable to the community and road managers as well.

This is the first of the maps to be issued and others are on the way. The whole of Mount Alexander Shire will be covered eventually. Newstead area roads are the last to be surveyed, and both Ern and Susanna Starr are involved.

An article detailing the the launch and the Management Objectives of the Roadside Management Plan appears on the front page of the Midland Express of Tues. Nov. 21.

Observations for October

The nest mentioned in last month's newsletter was brought in and opinion was that it was probably a thornbill's nest, not a Pardalote's

- * The Westridge track on Mount Alexander from Shepherd's lookout to Langs Lookout is now completed. Lots of interesting wild flowers including Twining Glycine was found on a recent walk. I.P.
- * There are lots of Spur Vellia along the Maldon Railway. I.P.
- * A fisherman had seen at least six platypus below the dam wall at Cairn Curran. FD
- * One has been seen in the Botanic Gardens. K.T.
- * Landcare has been finding lots of Pattersons Curse in the district including 400 acres on one property. M.H..
- * A tiger snake seen on the property on Mt Alexander. M.H.
- * Two Bluetongues have now been seen in the back yard in Kennedy Street. B.M.
- * There have been lots of different orchids at Smiths Reef near the dam, including three white Beard Orchids. S.B.
- * Golden Pennants have been a mass of flower near the Red-White- and-Blue mine. F.B.
- * A Sacred Kingfisher has been singing his heart out in the Botanical Gardens. M.W.
- * The Greater Black Cormorant was a new record for the block at Sandon. S.S.
- * Musk, Little and Purple-crowned Lorikeets are rather rare in Fryerstown although are often heard flying over. Rainbow Bee-eaters haven't been spotted in Fryersown this year, nor has the White-naped Honeyeater which is usually a regular. A single Satin Flycatcher passing through stayed in the vicinity for a day calling vigorously. K.D.
- * The birds in the nest box in Hunter St. turned out to be Eastern Rosellas. Only two of the clutch survived. There has still been only one owl seen in the gardens. The casts suggest it is living on beetles. Where the nest is is still a mystery. S.P.
- * At Harcourt a lone White Heron had been crying and calling, but that has all stopped now that there are two of them. B.E.
- * Two Nankeen Night Herons have been seen in the Gardens. M.W.
- * A White-winged Triller was seen and heard at Hawkins Road, Campbell's Creek. R.M.
- * A Shining Bronze-cuckoo has been heard calling along the creek near Gaulton Street. M.O.

CASTLEMAINE F.N.C. PROGRAM

N.B. Excursions leave promptly at times stated.

General Meetings are held at Continuing Education, Templeton Street. .

Fri. Dec. 8 Members and Visitors Night. 8pm Continuing Education, Templeton Street. Bring a plate of supper.

Sat. Dec. 9 North British Mine and west side of Tarrengower. Leave CHIRP 13 Mostyn St. Leader, M. Oliver. Time to be decided at the general meeting. It will depend on weather conditions.

Thurs. Dec 21 U3A/FNC bird outing. Meet Cont. Ed. car park 9.30 am.

Thurs Jan 18th U3A/FNC Dawn Breakfast. Meet at Cont. Ed. car park at 5.45 am . BYO breakfast. Home by 9.30am.

Fri Feb 9 Annual Meeting and 20th Birthday. Speakers will be 4 foundation members; George Broadway, Rita Mills, Geoff Sitch and Ern Perkins. Supper.

Sat Feb 10 Birthday Lunch in the Botanic Gardens. A B.Y.O. lunch. 12 noon, at the Rose Garden Car Park. This is near the new band rotunda. Lunch will be followed by a commemorative tree planting in Urquhart St. (south of the highway, near the creek).

Sun Feb 11 Dawn Breakfast at Kalimna Point. Our birthday continued. 6 am. at Kalimna Point. You may be earlier if you wish. From the east end of Lyttleton St., Drive about 200 metres north along Kalimna Tourist Road to the Kalimna Point car park. We will watch the sun rise from the Hilltop about 50 m. east of the car park. Afterwards BYO breakfast in the band rotunda on the west side of the road at the Point.

Fri Mar 8 Walking in Nepal. Speaker is Bruce Douglas.

March 8 - 11 VFNCA camp at Mt Portsea. See article p. 7 of Castlemaine Naturalist Oct. '95 for program and booking details.

Fri Apr 12. Introduction to Beetles. Speaker is Peter Kelly

Fri May 10 Waders in Siberia Speaker is Mike Weston.

Fri July 12 Some Birds of the Castlemaine district. Program by Club members.

Committee: C. Morris (Pres.), G. Broadway (V.P.), M. Willis (Sec.), B. Envall (Treas.), K. Turner (Prog.), R. Mills (P.O. & N/L Ed.), E. Perkins, M. Oliver, S. Parnaby, M. Hunter, S. Bruton, B. Maund.

Meetings:-

General - Second Friday every month (except Jan) at Continuing Education, Templeton St. at 8 pm.

Business - Held on the 4th Thursday every month (except Dec.) at 38 Campbell Street at 7.30pm. All Members are invited to attend.

Castlemaine Field Naturalists' Club Inc.

P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine, 3450.